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JOINT PROGRESS REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS OF THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME AND THE UNITED NATIONS CENTRE FOR HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (Habitat)

Joint report of the Executive Directors

Summary

The present report was prepared jointly by the Executive Directors of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 40/199 of 17 December 1985, on co-operation between UNEP and the Centre and as requested in Commission resolution 10/3 of 16 April 1987 UNEP Governing Council decision 14/3 of 18 June 1987 on the same subject. After a brief introduction, the report highlights the co-operation between UNEP and the Centre in the four previously established subject areas (section I), and within the system-wide efforts of the United Nations (section II), and then outlines future prospects (section III).

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INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 32/162 of 19 December 1977 concerning institutional arrangements for international co-operation in the field of human settlements, the General Assembly urged that the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the bureau of its Governing Council should meet biannually with the Executive Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) and the bureau of the Commission on Human Settlements "to review together their respective priorities and programmes for improving human settlements and to strengthen and extend co-operation between the two organizations". In its resolution 35/77 B if 5 December 1980, the General Assembly decided that the joint bureaux meetings should be held once a year rather than on a biannual basis. On 17 December 1985 the General Assembly adopted resolution 40/199, in which it decided to discontinue the joint meetings of the bureaux altogether.

2. The decision of the General Assembly to discontinue the joint meetings was taken on the joint recommendation of the Governing Council of UNEP and the Commission on Human Settlements. The recommendation was based on UNEP Governing Council decision 13/12 of 23 May 1985 and Commission resolution 8/14 of 8 May 1985, in which both the governing bodies furthermore:

(a) Expressed satisfaction at the continuing co-operation between the secretariats of UNEP and UNCHS (Habitat) and urged intensification of that co-operation;

(b) Decided to include in the agenda of their future sessions an item on co-operation between UNEP and UNCHS (Habitat) and to discuss the item on the basis of a common progress report of the two Executive Directors.

3. The present report on co-operation between UNEP AND UNCHS (Habitat) has been prepared jointly by the secretariats of the two organizations pursuant to General Assembly resolution 40/199 and as requested in UNEP Governing Council decision 13/12 and Commission resolution 8/14.

I. CO-OPERATION IN THE FOUR SUBJECT AREAS

4. This section contains information on the joint activities of UNEP and UNCHS (Habitat) under the four subject areas established by the joint bureaux meeting at its seventh session.

Subject area 1: Assessment of environmental conditions in human settlements

5. Under this subject area UNEP and UNCHS (Habitat) are co-operating in a pilot project for the development of urban environmental data by using satellite data and geographic information system analysis. The project is initiated within the frame of the Urban Management Programme, a joint programme of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank and UNCHS (Habitat), and is being carried out jointly with the Global Resources Information Database (GRID) at UNEP, which has the necessary hardware and software for interpretation of satellite data. Ouputs are designed to complement the environment, land-management and infrastructure components of the Urban Management Programme.

Subject area 2: Environmental aspects of policies, planning and management of human settlements - both rural and urban

6. Following the publication of the three volumes of Environmental Guidelines for Settlement Planning and Management in English, UNCHS (Habitat) sought and received the collaboration of the Government of France to prepare a French version of the guidelines. Negotiations are also under way for the possible preparation of a Spanish version.

7. There has been rising demand for copies of the Guidelines. The first run of 2000 copies was picked up within six months of its printing, whereupon UNCHS (Habitat) made arrangements to print an additional 2500 copies. The Guidelines have been used in a number of national and regional projects related to the environmental aspects of human settlements development. Some donor agencies and international banking organizations have encouraged use of the Guidelines in technical assistance projects and capital development projects.

8. UNCHS (Habitat) has initiated the Sustainable Cities Programme. The Principal goal of the Programme is to provide municipal authorities with an improved environmental planning and management capacity. The Programme continues the process which started when UNEP and UNCHS (Habitat) collaborated in the development of the Environmental Guidelines for Settlements Planning and Management. It is envisaged that the Sustainable Cities Programme will support city-level activities initially in 10-15 cities, in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe. UNEP will participate actively in this inter-organization effort and will contribute towards the mobilization of know-how, technology and financial resources. For the next few years this Programme will be the main one which will define the collaboration between UNEP and UNCHS (Habitat).

9. Both the Governing Council of UNEP and the Commission on Human Settlements have requested the Executive Directors to continue and enhance co-operation taking into account inter alia, the special needs of the coastal human settlements likely to be affected by global climate change. Accordingly, UNEP, in collaboration with several United Nations agencies is currently preparing a document on coastal zone management. The first draft of the document will be discussed at an inter-agency meeting.

10. For many countries there is some urgency in adopting an integrated coastal area management. Global change due to growth in resource consumption and population is expected to have its biggest impacts in the coastal zone. Six out of 10 people live within 60 kilometres of coastal waters and two thirds of the world's cities with populations of 2.5 million or more are near tidal estuaries. Within the next 20-30 years the population of the coastal zone is projected to almost double.

Subject area 3: Environmentally sound and appropriate human settlements technology

11. There are ongoing consultations between UNEP and UNCHS (Habitat) about activities in Guyana, particularly related to the UNCHS (Habitat)/UNDP project GUY/88/004, "Albuystown Pilot Upgrading", and the need to assess the possibilities of UNEP inputs in this regard. UNCHS (Habitat) briefed the Executive Director of UNEP before his recent visit to Guyana.

12. UNEP and UNCHS (Habitat) collaborated on the joint "Pilot Demonstration Project on Environmentally Sound Planning and Development of Human Settlements in the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen" (PDY/84/FO1), which has not been completed.

13. UNEP and UNCHS (Habitat) have developed a project related to climate change and waste management entitled "Refuse Derived Methane (RDM)". The project is designed to examine the greenhouse effect of landfill gas.

14. The project will examine three of the many varieties of anthropogenic processes that generate methane:

(a) Mining activities and industrial sources;

(b) Automobile exhausts;

(c) Refuse decomposition - particularly landfilled sites.

The outputs of the project are expected to be:

(a) A more accurate estimate of methane production from anthropogenic sources such as landfilled solid waste, mining activities, automobile exhausts and industrial losses;

(b) A more accurate estimate of the relative importance of methane release from landfilled solid waste, from both existing and unused sites, and its contribution to the greenhouse effect;

(c) The identification of priority areas where strategies could be most effectively adopted to reduce CH_4 emissions and where further work should be focused. The actual importance of the findings of this output will be established under a second phase of the project.

Subject area 4: Research, training and the dissemination of information on environmentally-sound human settlements planning and management

15. During the period under review several important documents on environmental aspects of human settlements were produced and disseminated by UNEP and UNCHS (Habitat). Some of the documents are described below.

(a) Publications produced by UNEP; Policy Guidelines for the Control of Environmental Pollution in Urban Areas of Developing Countries

16. The guidelines represent an attempt to fill a perceived gap in the literature relating to the control of environmental pollution in urban areas of developing countries. In this context the term "environmental pollution" refers to liquid and solid wastes and ambient air pollution. The guidelines discuss their management and control within the urban environment. The guidelines are addressed primarily to policy-makers with responsibilities for managing and controlling pollution in urban areas and are therefore focused on key policy, planning and decision-making issues.

Manual for Water Leakage Detection and Prevention in Municipal Water Supply Systems

17. Recently interest has grown in the effort to reduce excessive unaccounted-for water (UFW) in developing countries. UFW represents the difference between the volume of water delivered into a network of a municipal water-supply system and its "consumption". In many cities of the developing countries with old water supply networks, UFW varies between 30 and 40 per cent. Such a loss represents a very high and costly wastage of clean water. This may be the reason why municipal authorities have found it difficult to provide clean water in sufficient quantities to urban dwellers.

Solid Waste Management in Developing Countries

18. This publication brings together information on the management of solid wastes from 30 countries. The publication emerges from an international symposium on the subject held in the former Federal Republic of Germany. The volume contains 20 substantive papers and two annexes, which provide an extensive review of solid-waste management in the 30 countries that participated in the Symposium.

Welcome to Dodoma: managing open spaces in Tanzania's new capital

19. This publication, the first of its kind ever to be produced both in English and Kiswahili, describes the environmental planning approach that UNEP and UNCHS (Habitat) developed and implemented through the Capital Development Authority in Dodoma, United Republic of Tanzania. The publication focuses on the planning and management of open and green space, the plantation of fuelwood for domestic energy, and the provision of services for waste management and water supply. The publication represents the culmination of one decade of joint efforts by UNEP and UNCHS (Habitat) in assisting the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania in planning and developing the new capital.

(b) Publications produced by UNCHS (Habitat)

Urbanization and sustainable development in the Third World: an unrecognized global issue

20. This publication addresses environmental problems and their consequences at five different scales: (a) within the house and its immediate surroundings; (b) within the wider neighbourhood or district environment; (c) the city environment; (d) the region surrounding the city; and (e) the global level, and the contribution of city-based production and consumption to climate change, especially global warming.

The Conservation of drinking-water supplies: techniques for low-income settlements

21. This report is the first of its kind to address some of the issues of operation and maintenance of infrastructural facilities, and, as such, it is designed to draw attention to the long-neglected area of water conservation and to increase awareness of the role of conservation among decision-makers, engineers and planners.

A Methodological framework of environmental assessment for urban development

22. This study is concerned with three principal issues:

(a) Cities, primarily in low-income to middle-income countries will have to accommodate more than a billion new people over the next 15 years;

(b) Despite some tangible successes in management of population growth, the high rates of urban population growth in developing countries are being sustained by rural to urban migration, largely owing to the uneven distribution of development benefits;

(c) In the absence of effective environmental management policies and action, centres of rapidly growing urban populations are becoming the focus of serious degradation of life-supporting resources.

The methodology for environmental impact assessment, developed by this study, will be used as a tool for management aiming at long-term sustainable development.

"Environmental issues in urban management"

23. This background paper was submitted to the Second Advisory Panel Meeting for the UNDP/World Bank/UNCHS (Habitat) Urban Management Programme (UMP) held in Paris from 5-6 June 1989. The paper highlights key urban environmental management issues and identifies proposed priorities for action under UMP, namely improving municipal service coverage and efficiency: improving municipal waste treatment and disposal; achieving co-ordinated subsectors; achieving sustainable utilization of resources; and incorporating environmental planning and management techniques into city-wide strategic planning and implementation.

First Consultative Meeting on Environmental Issues in Urban Management

24. The proceedings of this meeting, which was held in Washington, D.C. from 18-19 September 1989, summarize its conclusions regarding target audience groups and the substantive scope of the environment component of the joint UNDP/World Bank/UNCHS (Habitat) Urban Management Programme.

"Urban growth and the environment"

25. This discussion paper was presented by UNCHS (Habitat) at the international meeting entitled "Cities, a Mainspring for the Economic Development of Developing Countries", held at Lille, France from 6-8 November 1989. The paper addresses the scale of urban environmental problems and responses by Governments and by external support agencies under the Urban Management Programme.

Sustainable Cities Programme

26. The Programme document for the Sustainable Cities Programme (SCP) describes how SCP will assist municipal authorities to identify environmental issues at the city level, establish priorities among those issues, and provide

them with tools to address those issues. SCP, which was launched by UNCHS (Habitat) in August 1990, will also facilitate a better general undertaking of the costs and benefits involved and of the economic costs of environmental neglect in urban areas.

II. CO-OPERATION IN SYSTEM-WIDE REPORTS

27. This section contains information on the co-operation between UNEP and UNCHS (Habitat) in a number of United Nations system-wide efforts related or directly relevant to the work and activities of both organizations. This information is given for reference purposes only. Details on the actual state and implications in any of these system-wide efforts for the future co-operation between UNEP and UNCHS (Habitat) are given and/or incorporated elsewhere in the documentation for the Governing Council of UNEP and the Commission on Human Settlements.

A. Meetings of the Designated Officials on Environmental Matters (DOEM)

28. A representative of UNCHS (Habitat) has participated regularly in the meetings of DOEM and has contributed to the discussions on the system-wide preparations for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), and the preparations for the 1992-1993 programme budget document of UNEP.

B. International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction 1990-2000

29. UNEP and UNCHS (Habitat) have held consultations on how each organization can best contribute to the International Framework of Action for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 44/236 of 22 December 1989. These informal consultations have been held with the purpose of co-ordinating and strengthening the contributors of each organization within their mandates to the capacity being developed for the Decade, including the Special High-level Council, the Scientific and Technical Committee, national structures, and particularly the High-level United Nations System Steering Committee.

III. FUTURE PROSPECTS

A. Preparation for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED)

30. As preparations for UNCED accelerate both UNEP and UNCHS (Habitat) have begun a variety of activities to contribute to the success of the Conference. One particular programme that can contribute practically to the demonstration of the close relationship between environment and development is the Sustainable Cities Programme launched by UNCHS (Habitat) on the occasion of the first substantive session of the Preparatory Committee of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Nairobi in August 1990. This initiative is described below.

31. Related to this programme, UNCHS (Habitat) expects to develop the underlying environmental concerns related to the provision of water supplies and management of water resources to meet large point demands exerted by rapidly growing urban centres in developing countries. The major issues and prospective actions to improve water resources management for urban use are

expected to be presented at the Conference on Water and Development in Dublin in January 1992, which is the principal preparatory activity concerning freshwater for UNCED later that year. This initiative will be developed with UNDP and the World Bank under the joint UNDP/UNCHS/World Bank Urban Management Programme. Also in the framework of this programme, an expert group meeting on hazardous wastes from small-scale industries is planned for mid-1991 with inputs from UNEP.

B. Sustainable Cities Programme

32. In the next few years, the co-operation between UNEP and UNCHS (Habitat) will resolve around the Sustainable Cities Programme. The programme is a logical outgrowth of a process that the two organizations started in 1982, when they initiated a project to bring together the most comprehensive publications yet produced on environmental aspects of human settlements. During the remaining biennium of the current System-wide Medium-term Environment Programme (SWMTEP II, 1990-1995), UNEP and UNCHS (Habitat) will seek every opportunity to apply the guidelines in selected megacities. The collaboration of other international organizations will be sought in this endeavour.